

## LUMINARIES

"What are those star-shaped things  
stuffed with cheese called?"  
the girl in front of me  
on line at the bakery asked.

"Cheese stars,"  
the girl behind the counter answered.

"Oh," the girl in front of me said.  
"give me three of those."

## INSTITUTIONAL COOKING

In the kitchen where I work  
our language is the language of reflex.

If something is borderline burnt, you say, "They  
like it that way."

If someone asks, "Is this enough?" you say, "Yeah,"  
if you don't care; "You better make more," if  
you're the one who needs it ("Whatever's left  
over we can always throw out").

If you accidentally throw out needed leftovers, you say,  
"There was none left."

If you are accused of not cleaning something properly,  
you say, "That was the guy at night."

If you're asked what you plan to serve in the employees'  
cafeteria in place of the main entree which has  
run out, you say, "Fried fish and onion rings."

If a co-worker comments that something might be  
prepared with more effort, since it is, after  
all, going to be served to the patients, you  
say, "Are you eating it?"

If someone asks, "Did you make this?" you first ask,  
"Do you like it?" If the answer is, "Yes, it's  
very good," you say, "Yes, I made it." If the  
answer is, "It tastes kinda funny," you say,  
"I had nothing to do with it, it was made yesterday."

If a co-worker asks, "Is that a three-ounce portion?"  
you say, "One size fits all."

If the boss asks, "How did that recipe I gave you  
come out?" you say, "Great" (knowing that he



will never notice that each recipe he gives you always remains in the exact spot on the bulletin board where he tacks it up, or that the measuring spoons, measuring cups, scales and sifters haven't moved once in all the time that he's been there).

When the guy from the soap company says, "Use only three tablespoons of soap for each pot sink," you say, "OK," and when he leaves, pick up the barrel container of powdered soap and dump the amount that you feel you'll need into the sink.

When the guy from the soap company asks you if you understand how to take the chemical analysis of the sanitation sink, using the chemical analysis kit, and how to record it in the log book, you say, "Yeah," and when he leaves, write down "15."

In the kitchen where I work, if the boss asks, "What are you smiling about?" you don't say anything; you just shake your head and keep on smiling.

#### BLANK SCREENS

There's this story about a group of aborigines who, upon first encountering a television, responded by not seeing the figures that moved across its screen. Apparently, TV shows were so far outside the aborigines realm of experience that their minds wouldn't translate them.

God protects the innocent.

Anyway, I believe this story to be true. I, one time, told a group of girls that there are four colors in a man's rainbow: brown, red, yellow, and blue (blue and green often go together; black and white don't count). Mauve? Plum? Peach? Mustard? Rust? Turquoise? Fit them into one of the above slots. We don't see them.

Then I told the girls about the way a man does laundry. First, "the sniff test." (They looked perplexed.) If the sniff test fails, and a man is forced to do laundry, he breaks it up into two piles: things he has to hang up and things he doesn't have to hang up. Two loads and you're done.

14 vacant eyes stared at me.  
I've never felt more alone.